

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 AGR-05 COME-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 SAJ-01 /043 W

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R 181546Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0062

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 2427 VICE 2417)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: FOOD SUPPLIES IRKUTSK, YAKUTSK AND Khabarovsk

REF: MOSCOW 0579, MOSCOW 0652

1. SUMMARY. EMBOFF AND WIFE VISITED IRKUTSK, UAKUTSK AND Khabarovsk FEBRUARY 7-13, 1976 AND CHECKED VARIOUS STATE FOOD STORES AND MARKETS FOR AVAILABILITY OF FOODSTUFFS AND BREAD PRODUCTS. FOODSTUFFS AND BREADS WERE GENERALLY AVAILABLE IN IRKUTSK AND Khabarovsk IN REASONABLE SUPPLY. ONE BACK STREET BREAD STORE HAD A SIGN ON WALL INDICATING THAT RATIONING WAS IN EFFECT. FOODSTUFFS IN YAKUTSK WERE AVAILABLE, BUT SINCE ALL FRESH FOODS MUST BE FLOWN IN, NO BASIS FOR COMPARISON IS AVAILABLE. LOCAL RESIDENTS IN YAKUTSK CLAIMED THAT FOODSTUFF AVAILABILITY IS NO BETTER OR WORSE THAN IN PAST WINTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. IRKUTSK: SEVERAL FOOD STORES, BREAD STORES AND THE LOCAL MARKET WERE CHECKED TO DETERMINE AVAILABILITY OF FOODSTUFFS IN THIS EASTERN SIBERIAN OUTPOST. FOODSTUFFS WERE AVAILABLE IN ALL STORES AND THE MARKET; NO UNUSUAL LINES WERE NOTED. NO FRESH VEGETABLES WERE SEEN, BUT THIS IS TO BE EXPECTED IN WINTER. THE MARKET WAS WELL
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STOCKED WITH ALL TYPES OF MEAT (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF VEAL, CHICKENS AND EGGS. BREAD, INCLUDING WHITE BREAD

WAS AVAILABLE AT ALL BREAD STORES CHECKED. HOWEVER, ONE BREAD STORE VISITED LOCATED WELL OFF THE BEATEN TRACK HAD LARGE SIGN OVER CHECK-OUT COUNTER INDICATING RATIONING WAS IN EFFECT. SIGN INDICATED THAT ONLY 2 KG BREAD, .5 KG PASTRY, .5 KG COOKIES AND 2 KG FLOUR WERE PERMITTED TO BE PURCHASED AT ONE TIME. WHEN SOVIETS WERE OBLIQUELY QUESTIONED CONCERNING THIS RATIONING, MOST INDICATED SURPRISE THAT IT EXISTED AND ALLOWED AS HOW IT WAS PROBABLY TO CUT DOWN ON THE WASTE. WASTE OF BREAD PRODUCTS IN IRKUTSK WAS CONSIDERABLE. EMBOFF REPEATEDLY NOTED HALF LOAVES OF BREAD BEING THROWN TO THE BIRDS OUT THE BACK WINDOWS OF MANY APARTMENT BUILDINGS.

3. YAKUTSK: ALL MATERIALS NOT PREPOSITIONED BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE EXTREME COLD IN THE FALL HAVE TO BE FLOWN IN. IT IS THEREFORE IMPOSSIBLE TO COMMENT ON THE RELATIVE AVAILABILITY OF FOODSTUFFS IN THIS NORTHERN SIBERIAN DEEP FREEZE, OTHER THAN TO STATE THAT RESIDENTS QUESTIONED SEEMED TO THINK THAT THIS WINTER WAS NO WORSE THAN PREVIOUS WINTERS. BREAD, MILK AND EGGS WERE AVAILABLE IN RESPECTABLE QUANTITIES, HOWEVER THE "WHITE" BREAD WAS OF POOR QUALITY, AND "GRAY" BY MOSCOW STANDARDS. RESIDENTS CALLED THIS "WINTER WHITE" AS OPPOSED TO REAL WHITE BREAD THAT IS AVAILABLE IN THE SUMMER.

4. Khabarovsk: FOODSTUFFS AND BREAD SEEMED TO BE IN RELATIVELY GOOD QUANTITY. EGGS, BEEF, AND PORK WERE SEEN IN QUANTITY. ALTHOUGH MUTTON WAS NOT NOTED IN THE FOODSTORES, THE DALNIY VOSTOK HOTEL OFFERED MUTTON KEBABS AND A MUTTON GOULASH ON ITS MENU. WHITE BREAD WAS AVAILABLE IN BREAD STORES, BUT NOT SERVED WITH THE MEALS AT THE RESTAURANTS. FISH WAS AVAILABLE IN QUANTITY AT WHAT WAS PROBABLY AN AFFORDABLE PRICE SINCE THESE WERE THE ONLY STORES WITH PRONOUNCED LINES OF PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCE, SUPPLIES, REPORTS, MUSIC, FOODS, VISITS, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW02427
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760067-0264
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760239/aaaabigs.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MOSCOW 579, 76 MOSCOW 652
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <01 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOOD SUPPLIES IRKUTSK, YAKUTSK AND KHABAROVSK
TAGS: PINT, SCUL, UR, PO, SONI VENTORUM WIND QUARTET
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006